UNFCCC Conference of the Parties 19th Session

Duty Travel Report

Outline of activities

SPREP participated in AOSIS preparatory meetings 6-8 November, and G-77 preparatory meetings 9-10 November, and was represented by the Director General (David Sheppard), Climate Change Adviser (Espen Ronneberg), Climate Change Adaptation Adviser (Diane McFadzien), Meteorology and Climatology Adviser (Neville Koop), Media and Public Relations Officer (Nanette Woonton) and Climate Change Support – Secondment (Ewan Cameron). The team participated in many agenda items of the COP, including finance, adaptation, research and systematic observation, loss and damage, Kyoto mechanisms, and participated in several side events. Extensive media coverage was also provided. The Director General made use of the opportunity to consult key development partners and agencies on a bilateral level.

Assistance was provided upon request to assist delegations with contacts, speeches and briefing documents.

Outcomes

Many strong speeches were made by PIC leaders about the urgency of the issue of climate change for the Pacific region and the need for stronger action for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. A modest package of decisions was reached at the COP in Warsaw that will keep the negotiations on track. However they underscore the formidable challenges facing parties as they work toward a new global agreement in Paris in 2015. This COP was the midpoint in the talks launched two years ago in Durban. While there was as usual a host of issues at play, a central focus of the Warsaw conference was defining a clearer path for the final two years of the Durban Platform negotiations. The talks ran a full day longer than planned, as has been the case for recent COPs, and a loose timeline was set by parties for proposing their "intended nationally determined contributions" to the 2015 agreement: by the first quarter of that year for those "ready to do so." But their decision very carefully avoided prejudging the ultimate shape of a Paris accord, and can be seen as less ambitious than the Kyoto Protocol language of commitments.

Equally major issues in Warsaw were demands from developing countries for increased climate finance, and for a new mechanism to help especially vulnerable nations cope with unavoidable "loss and damage" resulting from climate change. The latter was a particular concern for the Pacific Island Countries and for AOSIS. It had been agreed a year earlier in Doha that Warsaw would address "loss and damage", and the issue took on new prominence against the devastation caused by Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines just days before the conference.

Warsaw witnessed progress with the Green Climate Fund towards its launch in December 2013 and a presentation was made by the new CEO of the Fund. Warsaw also saw additional commitments to "top up" the Adaptation Fund with voluntary pledges, which, after these commitments, is now capitalised with a further US$ 104.3 million.

Developed countries, having at Copenhagen and Cancun previously promised to mobilize a total of $100 billion a year by 2020, were not in a position to set a quantified interim goal for ramping up

climate finance. And the new "Warsaw international mechanism for loss and damage associated with climate change impacts" fell short of the preferred outcomes advocated by the Pacific Island Countries. It establishes a new forum to provide information and expertise, and to consider further steps, but contains no provisions for additional funding. The final agreement also represented a compromise on behalf of the developing countries in that it places the issue of Loss and Damage under the framework of Adaptation, whereas they have argued that Loss and Damage should be dealt with separately from adaptation, and transcends 'beyond adaptation'. That said, arrangements will be reviewed in 2016.

While in 2009, the Copenhagen summit produced a comprehensive political agreement among leaders that a year later was translated into formal COP decisions in Cancun. A pivotal package deal the following year at COP 17 in Durban kept the Kyoto Protocol alive through 2020 and launched the Durban Platform round to negotiate a successor agreement. And COP 18 in Doha delivered the formal amendment needed to legally establish the Kyoto Protocol's second commitment period. By comparison, the progress achieved in Warsaw was largely procedural.

As a view of what we can expect in the next two years leading to Paris, the Warsaw COP underscored the tremendous distance between groups of parties on core issues such as the legal character of a new agreement, the differentiation of developed and developing country obligations and the issue of finance. The outcome effectively preserved the vague but delicate balance struck on those issues in Durban. The one significant new substantive element was the indication that countries' individual contributions to the Paris agreement will be "nationally determined."

Media report

This year the media and communications activities at the UNFCCC COP 19 were focussed on providing media coverage and support to the Pacific delegations as we had missed the deadline to book a side event and exhibition booth – the deadline for this was moved forward without our knowledge.

It was also a COP that was expected to be low key – delegation numbers had to be minimised due to the capacity of the venue and from past experience rallying attendance at side events during the colder COP's is difficult – our last event in Poland had dismal numbers despite our best attempts. Nevertheless it is noted that 8375 persons attended the Warsaw COP.

From a media perspective a difference was noticed this year in that Pacific delegations were willing to be interviewed, some even asking to be interviewed – this was really heartening and a nice approbation for the training we had conducted over the past two years! The positive response to interview requests and our media work was overwhelming and this was really pleasing. Feedback was also received from delegates, which was rewarding, and there were numerous comments relating to the human angles in our stories as well as the Pacific Women in Climate Change series which was popular.

Some of the key decisions:

Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action

In Durban, parties set a 2015 deadline for an agreement covering the post-2020 period, in the form of a "protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the

Convention applicable to all Parties." This formulation implied a major turning point in the evolution of the UNFCCC, in particular by loosening up the strict differentiation between developed and developing countries reflected in the Kyoto Protocol (which only set legally binding emission targets for developed countries).

In workshops convened prior to Warsaw, there appeared to be growing consensus toward a "hybrid" approach in which countries would define the content of their individual mitigation commitments unilaterally, subject to international rules to ensure the transparency of national commitments and to track their implementation. As a step in that direction, parties would present their intended commitments ahead of Paris to give one another the opportunity to assess their adequacy and fairness. In seeking to define that pre-Paris process, the negotiations in Warsaw was ostensibly procedural, but the discussions and interventions suggested otherwise.

Some large developing countries proposed an explicit differentiation between intended "commitments" from developed countries and intended "actions" from developing countries. Key developed countries, meanwhile, preferred "proposed," rather than "intended," commitments, to leave open the possibility that national proposals would be revised before being inscribed in the new agreement.

The compromise text calls on parties to "initiate or intensify domestic preparations for their intended nationally determined contributions," and to communicate them "well in advance" of the Paris meeting "by the first quarter of 2015 by those Parties ready to do so." The term "contributions," avoids any explicit differentiation between developed and developing countries, and leaves open the question of their ultimate legal character. Countries' contributions will be offered "in the context" of adopting a new instrument "under the Convention," a formulation that allows developing countries to continue to maintain that commitments in the new agreement must be differentiated. Although the decision does not establish any formal process to review parties' intended contributions, it calls for a decision at COP 20 to clarify the information to be provided when putting them forward, so that parties can better understand and assess one another's proposals. The decision also urges developed countries to provide support enabling developing countries to develop their intended contributions. This is thus going to most likely result in a rather hectic schedule for analysing these contributions, so as to be able to request refinements or revisions in time for the UN 6 month rule. However, without a clear timeframe or ambitious finance pledges from developed countries, it is unclear whether the plan will result in significant action.

Loss and damage

AOSIS, joined by other particularly vulnerable developing countries have for 22 years pressed for greater attention to "loss and damage" resulting from extreme events and slow-onset impacts such as sea-level rise, which will be unavoidable even with strong mitigation and adaptation efforts. COP 19 took a decision on the "institutional arrangements" called for in Doha on addressing loss and damage. While some members of AOSIS have been strongly pushing for a "compensation" mechanism, many developed countries were adamantly opposed, and the negotiations gradually downplayed this element, reflecting this opposition. The agreement at COP 19 establishes the "Warsaw international mechanism for loss and damage associated with climate change impacts" to share information and best practices, explore strategies to address loss and damage, and provide technical support to vulnerable countries. The new mechanism is subsumed under the Cancun

Adaptation Framework – and not, as AOSIS countries wanted, to be a new "pillar" of the Convention, with its executive committee reporting directly to the COP. There will be a chance though to revisit the mechanism and its structure at COP 22 in 2016.

Finance

As part of the Copenhagen and Cancun agreements, developed countries pledged $30 billion in climate finance from 2010 through 2012 (the "fast start" period) and to mobilize $100 billion a year in public and private finance for developing countries by 2020. Developing countries, concerned by the relative slowness of delivery of the fast start financing and a lack of progress in ramping up finance, pushed in Warsaw for an interim goal of $70 billion by 2016, but developed countries refused. They did however agree to begin submitting new biennial reports outlining their strategies for scaling up climate finance. And to ensure continued high-level attention to the issue, the COP decided to continue the long term finance work programme by convening regular biennial ministerial dialogues on climate finance running from 2014 to 2020. The COP also concluded arrangements with, and provided initial guidance to, the new Green Climate Fund launched in Cancun. The GCF will have its formal opening in Songdo, Republic of Korea in early December 2013.

There is still confusion about the level of climate finance available or disbursed, with developing countries saying that funding received is insignificant while developed countries highlight the billions they are providing.

Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV)

A key component of the Cancun Agreements was a new set of transparency mechanisms to strengthen the reporting and review of parties' implementation efforts. These include new biennial reports and processes of international assessment and review for developed countries (IAR) and international consultations and analysis (ICA) for developing countries. The COP concluded the final pieces for this MRV, agreeing on the composition, modalities, and procedures of the teams of technical experts (TTEs) that will analyze developing countries' biennial reports under ICA. The TTEs will aim to have a majority of experts from developing countries; each will be led by one developing country expert and one developed country expert, serving in their individual capacities.

Framework for Various Approaches / New Market Mechanism

In Doha, efforts toward establishing a new market mechanism under the UNFCCC were subsumed under a broader work programme on a Framework for Various Approaches, which also takes in non-market approaches. The FVA discussions have been difficult, in part because some parties are ideologically opposed to market-based approaches. Some groups hoped to make progress in Warsaw in elaborating an FVA that would facilitate the linking of market and non-market approaches–for example, by establishing accounting rules to ensure environmental integrity and prevent double-counting. While not explicitly tied to the ADP, the FVA could lay important groundwork for accounting rules under a Paris agreement. However, the discussions in Warsaw remained bogged down in the Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and never reached the COP. The issues will be taken up again next year, and it is an area where a better understanding is required within the region, given the importance for the Paris agreement.

REDD+

REDD+ guidelines were adopted for forest countries to develop "reference levels" against which their efforts to reduce deforestation will be measured, a key step toward qualifying for increased funding. Significantly, the framework requires that before receiving results-based finance, countries must show that social and environmental safeguards are being addressed and respected. It also recognizes the importance of benefits beyond emission reductions, such as improved livelihoods. Norway, the UK, and the United States pledged a total of $280 million for REDD+ efforts. **Research and Systematic Observation**

Overall the outcome was as good as could be expected with the US stating they are committed to maintaining and upgrading ocean networks in our region presently in a poor state of repair (especially the TAO buoy array along the equator critical for ENSO monitoring). Other developed countries were happy for the meeting to reflect the importance of putting adequate finance towards systematic observation and agreed to the motion put forward by Mali and seconded by Belize on behalf of AOSIS for a workshop to be convened focusing on the importance of observations and climate data for adaptation to climate change. The details of the workshop will be decided upon at the 40th session next June.

The Second Meeting of the Structured Expert Dialogue on the 2013–2015 Review

The COP, at its eighteenth session in Doha 2012, decided that the structured expert dialogue (SED) should consider on an on-going basis throughout the review the material from the Fifth Assessment Report of the IPCC as it becomes available, through regular scientific workshops and expert meetings and with the participation of Parties and experts, particularly from the IPCC.

The goals of SED 2 sessions at COP 19 were:

- to assess the adequacy of the long-term global goal to the extent possible, on the basis of the AR5 WGI;
- to assess the overall progress made so far towards achieving the long-term global goal, as well as the projected progress, including the likelihood of meeting and maintaining the goal; and
- to share lessons learned on the effectiveness of the support provided.

The presentation made by the IPCC team to the SED was particularly illuminating in so far as the goals of the session were concerned, as they highlighted that only the lowest of the Representative Concentration pathways (RCPs) considered in Working Group 1 (WG1) report of the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) offers any real guarantee of meeting the stated Long Term Global Goal (LTGG) of limiting overall warming of the global atmosphere to 2 degrees Celsius by 2100. AOSIS including Pacific Island countries have been pushing for this to be lowered to 1.5 degrees. RCP2.6 assumes radiative forcing is capped at 2.6 watts per square metre but to achieve this cap significant GHG emission reductions well in excess of those currently being offered are needed urgently, with overall cumulative emissions peaking well before 2100. The IPCC went on to say explicitly that delaying emissions reductions means the likelihood of meeting specific targets for capping warming will become increasingly difficult. While substantial cuts in global emissions will see temperatures

stabilize or possibly even fall before 2100, all of the RCPs, including the lowest one, will not prevent sea level from continuing to rise beyond the end of 2100.

Some countries, notably large emitters from the developed and developing countries, queried the accuracy of the predictions based on these RCPs. While acknowledging some uncertainty remains, overall the experience from AR4 coupled with that of AR5 has convinced them that the estimates are sound and represent the best knowledge available for now. In essence, a 1.5 degree goal is still achievable, but only with emissions peaking by 2020 and reducing thereafter with aggressive action to bring about deep emission reductions before 2050. Leading up to COP21 in Paris in 2015 the on-going SED of the review will continue to provide AOSIS with road markers along the way with which to measure the adequacy of the emission reduction targets being discussed and AR5 will continue to be the best source of scientific information up to and including COP21.

Lessons learnt

PICs expressed gratitude for the SPREP briefing notes, but would like additional coverage of topics in future sessions. The engagement of PICs in AOSIS was noticeably stronger than in previous years, mainly in the preparatory meetings, but needs to be enhanced at the crucial ministerial level negotiations - this needs to be addressed through the HLSM. The role of PIC technical officials preparing their ministers on the "negotiations state of play" and with recommendations, is a crucial step in the negotiations schedule. Many PICs were asking for SPREP assistance, including the possibility of a briefing for all Ministers. However, this was not possible due to timing of other meetings, the arrival times of Ministers not coinciding and other events. But it should be considered for 2014 and beyond, and would require intensive planning.

The release of the IPCC WG1 report clearly underlined the impacts of human induced climate change, and this needs to be further capitalised on as WG2 and WG3 reports are released. A suggestion would be to ensure an early Pacific oriented briefing on these reports as soon as they are available.

At the technical level, the AOSIS coordination and effort was very impressive at this COP, and played a leading and constructive role, largely due to the great work of the Lead Negotiator and her team.

The G77+China leadership by Fiji was also very impressive and is a great credit to the Fiji delegation. Links between AOSIS and G77 on issues such as Loss and Damage were an important feature of this COP and these links were stronger than at previous COPs.

Country information

Representation from PICs:
Cook Islands – 8 (included 3 SPREP staff)
Fiji – 17 (included 1 USP)
Kiribati - 6
Marshall Islands - 5
Micronesia - 5
Nauru – 29 (included 6 USP students)
Niue - 3
Palau - 11

Papua New Guinea - 19
Samoa – 8 (included 3 SPREP staff)
Solomon Islands – 16 (included 2 PIFS staff)
Tonga - 5
Tuvalu - 10
Vanuatu - 16
CROP:
SPC – 1
USP – 1, and 6 students
PIFS – 2
SPREP - 6